



Special Hunt Area Rules

Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie

2012 Turkey Hunting

Welcome to the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie. The U.S. Forest Service is pleased to offer 9,100 acres of the Prairie to general public access in 2012. Any lands open to the public are open to hunting, unless otherwise posted. NOTE that turkey hunting on public lands alternates between the east and west sides of Midwin; not all of the public lands at Midwin are open to hunting on any one day.

The Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and is a federal facility. State hunting laws as outlined in the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2011-2012 are enforced at Midwin with the following additions.

Special Hunt Area rules have been developed for all hunting at Midwin consistent with U.S. Forest Service policies and guidelines for recreation and public access. Other supplemental and short-term policies have also been developed because the Army continues to clean up contamination within Midwin's boundaries and because the Prairie is undergoing restoration to native habitats. All of these conditions combine to provide a unique recreational experience at Midwin for all visitors.



GENERAL RULES & PROCEDURES

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions regarding the Midewin hunting program should be directed to:

U.S. Forest Service
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30239 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481
(815) 423-6370
(815) 423-6389 TTY
jlhutter@fs.fed.us
www.fs.fed.us/mntp/

In case of medical emergency, always call 911 first.
Midewin After-Hours Phone Line: (815) 263-4060.

HUNTING SEASONS

Midewin is open for turkey hunting from Monday, April 16 through Thursday, May 17:

1st	Monday, April 16 - Friday, April 20
2nd	Saturday, April 21 - Thursday, April 26
3rd	Friday, April 27 - Wednesday, May 2
4th	Thursday, May 3 - Wednesday, May 9
5th	Thursday, May 10 - Thursday, May 17

Shooting any game or nongame species other than turkey at Midewin is prohibited.

AREAS OPEN TO HUNTING

All areas open to the general public are also open to hunting. A total of 9,100 acres is currently open to the public. Hunting on Even-numbered calendar days is restricted to public lands on the East Side of Midewin. Hunting on Odd-numbered

calendar days is restricted to public land on the West Side of Midewin.

West Side: Odd-numbered Calendar Days Only

There are 4,770 acres open to the public on the west side of Midewin, and four parking lots:

- Explosives Road Trailhead (P5) west of State Route 53; and
- P1, P3, and P4 north of River Road between I-55 and State Route 53.

East Side: Even-numbered Calendar Days Only

There are 4,347 acres open to the public on the east side of Midewin, and two parking lots:

- Hoff Road Trailhead, located two miles east of State Route 53; and
- Iron Bridge Trailhead, located about 2.5 miles north of the Midewin office and just north of the iron railroad overpass.
- Access Point: Wauponsee Trail at Road 1 North or Offner Road on Midewin's eastern boundary; however, there is no parking available at this access point and the Forest Preserve District of Will County currently prohibits carrying weapons on the Wauponsee Trail (General Use Regulation Ordinance No. 124, Ch. V, Sec. 5).

It is very important to consult the provided maps for detailed information on the boundaries of the open areas. Lands outside these boundaries are not open to public access and trespassers may be cited and fined.

In addition to Forest Service boundary maps, the four topographic maps for lands within the Midewin boundaries are available for sale (\$8 each) or a water-resistant composite (\$20) at the Midewin Welcome Center.

SIGN IN & OUT

Hunters must sign in and out of hunting for the day at the information bulletin boards in the six public parking lots.

Turkey hunting hours per IDNR rules are from ½ hour before sunrise until 1:00 p.m. Midwin open hours are from 4 a.m. until 10 p.m. Daily sign in at Midwin may begin at 4 a.m. and all hunters must sign out no later than 3:00 p.m.

PERMITS & PASSES

All turkey hunting permits at Midwin are issued through the Illinois DNR lottery system for Special Hunt Areas.

In addition, all hunters must obtain a hunting pass from the Midwin Welcome Center. There is no charge for this pass. Hunters must show their state-issued hunting license in order to get a Midwin hunting pass.

The pocket portion of the pass must be carried at all times while hunting at Midwin. The larger portion of the pass must be placed in clear view through the front windshield. At the end of the season, this pass must be completed and returned to Midwin by June 1, 2012.

The Midwin hunting pass entitles hunters to be on site from two hours before sunrise -- earlier than the general public. This is to allow time for hunters to hike to their hunting sites before the hunt begins.

Any violation of the rules and regulations may result in the forfeiture of hunting privileges at Midwin and issuance of a citation.

TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT CLOSURES

Management activities, volunteer workdays, and public programs will occur periodically throughout the hunting season. The Forest Service may temporarily or permanently close areas to hunting. The system of alternating hunting days between the two sides of Midwin should reduce the need to close areas. Refer to the bulletin boards in the parking lots or call the Midwin Welcome Center for the most up-to-date information.

PUBLIC ACCESS

All hunting areas are open to the general public. The following guidelines must be observed and will be enforced to ensure a safe and enjoyable recreational experience for all visitors.

Access to public lands at Midewin is by nonmotorized means only – hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, snow shoeing, or cross country skiing.

There are nearly 32 miles of interim and permanent trails available for recreational access, including about 20 miles for shared use by hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians, and about 12 miles for hikers only.

Equestrians and bicyclists are required to stay on these designated interim trails at all times of the year. Non-hunting hikers are restricted to trails only during firearm hunting seasons. All visitors during hunting season are advised to wear blaze orange for safety.

Many hunters use bicycles on the shared use trails to get closer to hunting areas on the East Side. If hunters leave the trail, however, bicycles must remain and can be secured beside the trail.

Hunters using bicycles or horses to get part way to their hunting sites must also obey state laws regarding transportation of firearms. Firearms must be unloaded and completely cased while riding horses or bicycles at Midewin.

The Forest Service prohibits shooting in or within 150 yards of any building, developed recreation site, or occupied area. At Midewin, this means no shooting when hikers, bicyclists, or equestrians are within 150 yards of a hunter. Shooting across roads, bodies of water, and cemeteries is also prohibited.

There is no camping at Midewin or in its parking lots. Hunters may begin using any of the six parking lots one hour before sign-in time (three hours before sunrise).

ACCESSIBLE HUNTING BLINDS

Accessible hunting blinds may be reserved for hunters with an Illinois P2 or P2A card. Reservations must be made at the Midewin Welcome Center. Hunters must also sign in and out of the accessible blind at the parking lot trailhead on the day of their hunt.

Only hunters with a reservation may use an accessible blind. No other hunters may hunt within 50 yards of an accessible blind when it is occupied, with the exception of the companion assisting the hunter reserving the accessible blind.

SUNRISE/SUNSET

Exact sunrise and sunset times are listed in the Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations 2011-2012.

SUCCESSFUL HUNT

Successful hunters must follow state regulations to register their harvest.

Forty turkey hunting permits were issued for the 2011 spring turkey hunt at Midewin, eight hunters per season.

PRAIRIE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The Forest Service, together with the support of hundreds of volunteers and partner agencies, businesses, and organizations, is working to restore the prairie to the Prairie State.

You can watch this process in action over the years during your visits to Midewin. It may look more like a construction site in some areas, but the activities you will see are actually important steps in rebuilding the natural habitats, biodiversity, and landscape. A variety of “construction” activities are part of the restoration process.

- demolition of abandoned buildings,
- prescribed burns to prepare land for habitat restoration,

- cutting of non-native or invasive trees and brush,
- application of herbicide to non-native or invasive plants,
- earthmoving equipment restoring the shape of the land,
- cattle grazing to maintain grassland bird habitat,
- farm equipment planting, mowing, spraying Roundup, and harvesting to restore desired or keep out unwanted plant species.

Visitors may observe equipment, supplies, flagging, or structures placed to support these restoration activities or research. Please respect private property and ongoing work by not disturbing these materials.

Some hunters are concerned that vegetation changes will reduce wildlife habitat and population. While short-term disturbance may drive animals to less busy areas, the long-term restoration is not expected to significantly affect the size of the game population at Midewin.

OTHER RULES

No motorized vehicles may be used for recreation at Midewin. Visitors may, however, see vehicles being used for the ongoing work of restoring the prairie.

Some activities are not allowed at Midewin, including camping, fishing, swimming, collecting plants, and pursuits that may disturb the soil, such as metal detection. If you have a question about whether an activity is permitted at Midewin, please ask at the Welcome Center.

Heritage Resources: Disturbing or removing any prehistoric, historic, or archaeological resource, site, artifact, property, or structure is prohibited.

Dogs: Dogs are currently welcome at Midewin as long as they are on a maximum 6-foot leash and stay on the trail.

Livestock & Gates: Cattle are helping maintain grassland bird habitat by keeping grass at the height preferred by different

bird species for nesting and feeding. Please keep pasture gates closed and do not disturb the cows.

Traffic: Operators of heavy equipment on the roads and in the fields may not be able to see or hear visitors. Stay well away from this equipment. Some areas may be posted closed during project work.

Arsenic contamination: Commercial weed-killing sprays used along security fencelines and railbeds in the 1960s contained high concentrations of arsenic, which remain in the soil in some areas. Arsenic contamination may not be apparent because of growing vegetation. Do not disturb the soil at Midewin.

We expect interest in hunting at Midewin to continue to grow. Successful management of this program will depend on all recreationists – hunters, hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians – understanding the rules and being considerate of each other.

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